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AUTHOR Comeaux, Patricia; Aitken, Joan E.
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ABSTRACT

In outline agenda form, this guide addresses the issue of training and supervising graduate students teaching the basic undergraduate speech course in university speech departments. The sections are as follows: (1) Introduction of staff and participants; (2) Rationale for assuring quality and standardization in the basic course by systematically training graduate teaching assistants (GTAs); (3) Problems/challenges of training graduate students and directing the basic course; (4) Concerns and training needs of GTAs: a survey; (5) Ways to achieve standardization in the basic course; and (6) Systematic program for training and supervising GTAs (including criteria for selection and placement process, university-wide orientation for GTAs, department orientations for GTAs of the basic course, a sample graduate methods class at Murray State University: Communication in Instructional Environments, and ongoing feedback and assessment in training GTAs). The paper's final page offers a case study intended to stimulate discussion about a real-life teaching situation. Fourteen references are attached. (SR)

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Murray State University

College of Fine Arts and Communication
Department of Speech Communication & Theatre
Murray, Kentucky 42071-3303 (502) 762-4483

ASSURING QUALITY AND STANDARD EVALUATION IN THE BASIC COURSE: TRAINING AND SUPERVISING GRADUATE STUDENTS

Patricia Comeaux
Department of Speech Communication and Theatre
Murray State University
Murray, KY 42071

Joan E. Aitken
Department of Communication Studies
5100 Rockhill road
University of Missouri-Kansas City
Kansas City, MO 64110

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ASSURING QUALITY AND STANDARD EVALUATION IN THE BASIC COURSE:
TRAINING AND SUPERVISING GRADUATE STUDENTS

Agenda for SCA Short Course

1. Introduction of staff and participants

   a. participants fill out information sheets
   b. objectives of short course
      1) to provide an overview of the issues and problems in training graduate teaching assistants
      2) to provide a rationale for standardization in the basic course
      3) to suggest ways to achieve standardization
      4) to provide a description of a systematic program for training and supervising graduate teaching assistants
      5) to provide a handbook that participants can use in training graduate students and in teaching the graduate methods class
      6) to provide a manual for teachers that participants can use in directing the basic course

2. Rationale for assuring quality and standardization in the basic course by systematically training graduate teaching assistants

   a. a call to return to teaching (Chesboro, 1989)
      1) to focus our research on how learning occurs
      2) to assess the quality of learning in our classrooms

   b. image and value of basic course
      1) faculty and department's reputation
      2) recruitment for majors

   c. expected uniform quality of instruction in all sections (DeBoer, 1979; Staton-Spicer & Nyquist, 1979)
      1) increased emphasis on teacher competency from NCATE and other accreditation agencies for outcomes assessment
      2) uniformity and quality in instruction

   d. responsibilities to graduate students and program (Staton-Spicer & Nyquist, 1979; Witherspoon, 1979)
      1) training ground for future university professors
      2) opportunity to develop and demonstrate teaching competencies for securing future employment

e. assumptions about basic couse administration
    1) course standardization enhances effective course administration
    2) principles of effective organizational communication will make administration easier
    3) graduate teaching assistants have special needs, particularly in understanding the specific expectations to which they are accountable
    4) attention to administrative details up front will enchance smooth operation

3. Problems/Challenges of training graduate students and directing the basic course

a. different levels of experience and maturity
b. differences in content knowledge (no undergraduate in related discipline)
c. differences in perspectives of course (theoretical vs skills approach to basic course)
d. differences in style of teaching (if experienced)
e. limited experience and resistant attitudes in working in team teaching or coordinated approach to basic course
f. lack of department cohesion or vision for basic course
g. outcome assessments or accountability issues
h. SACS or other agency accreditation requirements for graduate teaching assistants
i. increasing enrollments and decreasing budgets
j. lack of administrative support
    1) limited release time for director
    2) limited economic support for training
k. participant contributions: additional problems
l. graduate student turn over rate

4. Concerns and training needs of GTA's: a survey

a. university wide survey (MSU): top four needs
    1) creating interest in course content
    2) teaching strategies and techniques
    3) what to expect of students
        a) interest and motivational level
        b) abilities and knowledge
        c) grading expectations and standards
    4) university and department policies and procedures
        a) clear expression of responsibilities
        b) clear understanding of roles as teacher and student

b. department interview of GTA's (MSU)
   1) "What were your fears/concerns entering this program?"
      a) not enough knowledge of concepts
      b) afraid to be found out; lack of credibility
      c) uncertainty that I could teach public speaking skills and evaluate speeches
      d) never graded a paper before
      e) what would be my relationship to faculty; where does the TA fit into department

   2) "What did you need or want to know upon accepting the assistantship?"
      a) the goals and objectives of the course
      b) the minimum standards or expectations
      c) a textbook, syllabus, class handouts
      d) that flexibility and creativity in selecting and implementing lab activities would be encouraged
      e) department expectations of teaching assistants
      f) expectations of supervisor/director of basic courses
      g) faculty attitude regarding GTA's and students
      h) the particulars of the student taking the basic course: individual learning styles, motivational levels, knowledge and abilities
      i) comprehensive list of suggested activities to demonstrate concepts in text/lecture
      j) on-going dialogue for exchange of teaching strategies and classroom exercises
      k) feedback and evaluation from supervisor
      l) specific course work and training in instructional theory and methods

5. <u>Ways to achieve standardization in the basic course</u>

   a. a single person, who coordinates instruction and directs the basic course
   b. joint training for all course teachers
   c. the use of the same textbook in all classes
   d. the use of the same workbook or pool of instructional assignments and activities
   e. departmental examinations
   f. a departmental syllabus
   g. regular meetings of course teachers
   i. standardize the course description, goals, and objectives
   j. a teacher's manual
   k. common major assignments
   l. standard speech critique or feedback sheets
   m. standard testing dates for mid-term and final exams

h. instructional development for graduate assistants

1) a graduate course (for credit) which all new graduate teaching assistants must attend
2) individuals complete internship and/or graduate methods course prior to teaching
3) individuals may take graduate methods course in conjunction with teaching assignment
4) graduate assistants attend orientation sessions before classes start
5) department may have instructional resource center with files of teaching materials and strategies
6) formal or informal meetings may be held to promote a sharing of ideas and experiences among the assistants
7) departmental seminars on teaching and research could include graduate students
8) assistants may receive training in a variety of roles and responsibilities
9) graduate assistants may be encouraged to attend regional meetings of the Council for Higher Education or other group designed to help in faculty development
10) graduate assistants may attend state, regional, or national conferences
11) graduate assistants may work with senior faculty on conference papers and presentations

6. Systematic program for training and supervising graduate teaching assistants

a. Criteria for Selection and Placement Process

1) select on academic potential of student
2) interview to determine knowledge and experience
3) describe choice of courses or assistantships
4) ask individual to describe strengths and weaknesses in particular areas and abilities
5) ask individual to provide rationale for preference for course or assistantship

b. University-wide Orientation for GTA's

1) designing a course around intended learning outcomes
2) classroom communication and learning
3) the first day: creating interest and setting the learning environment
4) philosophies of teaching/learning
5) teaching strategies for different learning styles
6) presenting information in the classroom
7) tips on leading classroom discussions
8) building your image: credibility and control

c. Department Orientation for GTA's of the Basic Course

1) roles and responsibilities of the graduate assistant in speech communication: how to juggle the roles of student, teacher, colleague, etc.
2) philosophy and goals of the basic course in communication
3) structure and coordination of the basic courses in communication: a team approach of lecture/lab course
4) responsibilities and expectations of team members
   a) director
   b) lecture instructors
   c) graduate lab assistants
   d) support staff
5) professional image of graduate lab instructor: credible, reliable, consistent, objective and fair
6) encouraging responsibility in students
   a) lab activities: applying concepts from lecture and assuming responsibility for learning
   b) classroom policies and expectations in the basic courses (course syllabus)
   c) attitudes and images of the basic courses
   d) descriptions of the students of the basic courses
   e) grade expectations: administrators, instructors, students
7) getting started: the first two weeks of classes

e. A Sample Graduate Methods Class at MSU: SAT 672, Communication in Instructional Environments

1) course syllabus and objectives
2) major project: design and implement an instructional unit (a learning packet)
3) criteria for evaluation of the learning packet
4) an excerpt from a graduate student's learning packet
5) developing the teacher-scholar model: the reading lists
6) schedule of topics for the course: a seminar approach
7) using a learner-centered approach in the basic courses: intervening in the process of learning

8) training workshops for lab instructors in public speaking (SAT 161)
   a) evaluating delivery skills: the first speech
   b) teaching the process of speech preparation through topic development and organization
   c) evaluating informative speeches and outlines: standard assignment and evaluation form
   d) achieving standard expectations: analyzing student outlines and videotaped speeches

e) teaching the use of audience analysis to structure persuasive arguments
f) evaluating persuasive speeches and outlines: standard assignment and evaluation form
g) achieving standard expectations: analyzing student outlines and videotaped speeches

9) training workshops for lab instructors in interpersonal communication (SAT 181)
a) preparing and leading classroom discussions
b) designing small group learning activities
c) designing and assigning paper I: an interview and profile of an individual of a different culture
d) evaluating paper I: standardized assignment and evaluation form
e) achieving standard expectations: analyzing student papers
f) teaching the use a problem solving model to analyze interpersonal relationships: group analysis papers
g) evaluating paper II (an analysis of a relationship): standard assignment and evaluation form
h) achieving standard expectations: analyzing student papers

f. Ongoing Feedback and Assessment in Training GTA's

a) establishing a dialogue for feedback
1) development of a team approach or colleague atmosphere
2) sample memos to graduate assistants

b) establishing criteria for evaluation
1) encouraging graduate assistants to use informal early semester feedback from students

2) initial assessment of teaching effectiveness and a model for an instructional development program (Staton-Spicer & Nyquist, 1979)
3) sample teaching assessment instruments
4) summary evaluation of teaching assistants: the important issues (Bassett & Browning, 1978)

c) handling problems with graduate teaching assistants

Case Study: The Test Bank is Out

Objective: to stimulate discussion on a real-life teaching situation

Britt was a first year graduate teaching assistant in a basic course with about 1000 students a semester. He just graduated from college and began teaching the course as part of his graduate assistantship. He was given responsibility for two sections of the basic course. Britt received support for his instruction through weekly meetings with the course director, a solid textbook, teacher's manual, and the course supervisor's guidebook for teaching the basic course. Britt often didn't feel like a teacher, though He felt more like a college student himself. The change in roles from classes he taught to classes he took was confusing. He wasn't sure how much distance to have with his students. He didn't think he was a great teacher, but he wanted to be like.

The basic course had a common mid-semester examination for all sections. The common test was used to ensure consistency of instruction and also as a means of evaluating teacher success. Those teachers whose students were motivated to learn the material should receive consistent test results. There were four forms of the test--each with different questions.
Form A was given on Tuesday morning (for Tuesday-Thursday classes). Form B was given on Tuesday afternoon and evening (for Tuesday-Thursday classes). Form C was given Wednesday morning (for Monday-Wednesday-Friday sections). Form D was given Wednesday afternoon and evening (for Monday-Wednesday-Friday sections). The course director prepared the exam primarily from the textbook instructor's manual, and gave all teaching assistants a study guide to use with their students. Because the pool of questions in the instructor's manual was used each semester, the course director told teaching assistants orally and in writing that they must keep close guard on their copies of the teacher's manual. The test questions must not get out.

About a week before the big examination, Britt started to worry. He didn't seem to have very good control in his classroom. His lectures degenerated whenever the students started talking. He was afraid that the students wouldn't do very well on the exam. Although he went over the test study guide, a couple female students came to his office asking for additional study help. He decided that he would lend them his copy of the instructor's manual. "Be sure to give it back to me tomorrow," he said, "because it's important that I don't lose it."

1. What will be you immediate response?
2. Who will you involve in the incident?
3. What are the issues that need to be resolved?
4. How will you resolve them?

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